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SOME LESSONS OF THE ELECTION

BY EDWARD G. LOWRY

HAPPILY, the causes of the great overturn are not far to seek. It does not require the seventh son of a seventh son to interpret the defeat of Republicans in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Ohio, Massachusetts, Indiana, and the election of a Democratic House of Representatives. Colonel Roosevelt, the Payne-Aldrich law and Republican dissensions and factional quarrels all played a part in the general result. Dissatisfaction with the new tariff law would have sufficed to turn the House over to the Democrats. Had Colonel Roosevelt not projected himself and his New Nationalism into the campaign, the single issue in the Congressional districts would have been the Payne-Aldrich schedules. There can be no doubt what the decision of the country would have been.

A Democratic House was foreseen. When the members of Congress went home after the special session at which the Dingley tariff was revised they knew what the verdict of the country would be on their handiwork. President Taft knew what it would be. Even so long ago as last June he made no secret of his apprehension that the Republican control of Congress would be broken. The President knew that to the country the Payne-Aldrich law was a broken pledge. But none of the prophets peered far enough into

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the future to discern clearly Democratic Governors in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts and Ohio, and Democratic Senators from West Virginia, Indiana, Nebraska, Ohio, New Jersey, New York and possibly Montana and Massachusetts in the seats of Scott, Beveridge, Burkett, Dick, Kean, Depew, Carter and Lodge. It was hardly believed even by the most hopeful that the election of a Democratic Governor and Legislature in Maine in September foreshadowed similar overturns in States that have come to be regarded since 1896 as normally Republican.

No honest Democrat with any sense of gratitude withholds from Colonel Roosevelt the credit that is due him for his share in bringing about the expulsion of the Republicans from power in these several States. Nothing more curious, more puzzling and more interesting has developed in Mr. Roosevelt's entire public career than his absolute flat failure this year to diagnose correctly the state of mind and the temper of the great mass of the voters all over the country. In previous campaigns in which he has been the chief figure, and at all other times in the past, he has shown an intuitive perception that amounted to genius for reading the general mind. Himself an articulate emotionalist, he has always been able to formulate in striking simple phrases the current thought of the electorate.

When Mr. Roosevelt landed in New York, in June, from the African game trails and his tour through Europe his prestige was never greater, and his hold on his great personal following in his own country was never stronger. Almost from the very beginning he began to conduct himself in a way to excite the suspicion and distrust of the "Roosevelt vote." As the campaign progressed he went further and further astray, and now that the returns are in it is clearly shown that the net result of his personal campaign was to drive Republicans temporarily over to the support of Democratic candidates. Every one of the Republican nominees Mr. Roosevelt sought to help was defeated. Every one of the Democrats he urged the electors to reject was elected. This might have happened, of course, had Mr. Roosevelt stayed out of the campaign, but the present point is that he could not prevent it; that apparently he could not turn a single vote away from the Democrats, but, on the contrary, his actions and his methods caused Republicans to vote against the men the ex-President urged upon them.

Political inquirers who travelled about the country during the progress of the campaign quickly discovered that the most impressive and important factor in the Middle Western States was the Roosevelt secession. The great body of the Insurgent Republicans in these States had either become openly and bitterly hostile to the ex-President or were shocked, disheartened and discouraged by his course since he returned from Africa. A journey through and a survey of political conditions in Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Kansas, Missouri and Iowa revealed that but two States remained true to their old idol.

In Iowa the dissatisfaction among the old Roosevelt partisans and followers was the one great overshadowing political fact. The Republican Progressives of Iowa were as bitter and thoroughgoing in their antagonism to Mr. Roosevelt as were the members of the Union League Club of New York to Mr. Bryan in 1896. They felt that they had been betrayed and that Mr. Roosevelt had greatly set back the movement which they began — namely, to reorganize and recreate the Republican party. They declared that they had done with him for good and for all; that for the sake of his personal advantage and gain, and to become boss of the New York State Republican machine, he had checked a great national movement within the Republican party and thrown away a leadership which might have been his and which might have been used, had he so desired, to make him the Republican nominee for the Presidency in 1912.

The more radical of the Progressive Republicans in Iowa and elsewhere began watching Mr. Roosevelt very closely as soon as he landed in New York last June. As they put it, there was but one political question at that time: Will the Colonel align himself with the Progressive radicals like Cummins, La Follette, Dolliver, Bristow, Beveridge and Clapp, who are seeking to overthrow the old selfish control of the Republican party, or will he align himself with the old wing? That was the question that was squarely put before him. The Western radicals expected Mr. Roosevelt to answer it instantly and declare himself with the Progressives. They became distrustful when the Colonel began holding conferences with all manner of politicians and trying to sense the situation before he declared himself. When he started on his first Western trip his position was still

obscure, and one was told that the distrust then beginning to be felt in these States manifested itself at some of the Roosevelt meetings; notably at Omaha, where there were calls for Senator Dolliver even before Mr. Roosevelt had concluded his speech.

After the Osawatomie speech the radical Progressive Republicans were reassured, Mr. Roosevelt had shown himself willing to go even further than they were willing to follow. On that speech they accepted him as one of themselves. The Colonel went back East with his Middle Western popularity and prestige apparently unimpaired. The "Roosevelt country" awaited the outcome of his contest for control at Saratoga and was delighted when the news came that he had been successful against Barnes, Woodruff and the others and that he would control the convention. Then they awaited the platform. They were keenly interested in what would be said about the Taft Administration, the Payne-Aldrich tariff bill and Conservation.

They confidently looked forward to a platform drawn under Mr. Roosevelt's guidance and adopted by a convention dominated by him which would closely resemble the declaration of principles made by the Republicans of Indiana, of Kansas and of Iowa. They never imagined that the platform would be anything but Progressive. Hence the platform which Mr. Roosevelt accepted at Saratoga, with its praise of the tariff bill and of Mr. Taft, came to these idolatrous partisans in the West like a blow between the eyes.

It now seems that everywhere Colonel Roosevelt went, except New Hampshire, and every candidate he spoke for was defeated. He went out to Iowa at the very close of the campaign to speak for Charles Grilk, a Progressive candidate for Congress in the Davenport district. But it appears that Grilk was one of the few Progressive Republican candidates for Congress who were defeated. The Colonel made two trips to Indiana to speak for Beveridge and Beveridge lost. He spoke in Ohio, and Harmon carried the State and the Democrats gained seats in Congress. He made charges against Judge Baldwin in Connecticut, and that rock-ribbed Republican State went Democratic. First and foremost, and above all, he exercised every bit of his skill as a politician and threw all of his prestige into the balance to carry New York for Stimson and failed overwhelmingly.

It seems clear that the reports of disaffection toward Mr. Roosevelt in the Middle West and elsewhere which became current during the campaign were understated rather than overstated. Two years ago it would not have been necessary for Mr. Roosevelt to have travelled to Iowa less than a week before the election to help elect a Republican candidate for Congress. It would have been only necessary for him to have written a letter to the candidate and his election would have been assured. This year, though he went out and made a personal appeal to the voters, his candidate lost.

That is a fair measure of the present eclipse of Mr. Roosevelt's prestige and influence with voters who for a good many years now have done his bidding. The last time Hepburn of Iowa came to Congress he came on the strength of a letter which Mr. Roosevelt wrote. When Mr. Dix can carry Roosevelt's own election district at Oyster Bay, and Cocks, his particular protégé in Congress, also from the Oyster Bay district, loses his seat in the House which he carried last time by nearly 10,000 plurality, another indication is discerned of waning prestige. The verdict of the vicinage always has been held to be conclusive.

The Insurgents seem to have fared extraordinarily well in the reversal of popular sentiment which swept so many of their party associates out of office. Beveridge of Indiana appears to have been the only one of them of any consequence in either branch of Congress who was defeated. The refusal of the Indiana voters to return him to the Senate proves that the State is essentially Democratic; that it was Democratic before it was Insurgent. By turning Insurgent and by making the Republican nominee in the State Insurgent Mr. Beveridge made Indiana a close and doubtful State this year, but he was not able to turn it over. The State has been coming back to the Democratic party slowly but surely ever since the Parker campaign. Two years ago it elected a Democratic Governor, a Democratic Senator, and nine out of eleven Congress districts went to the Democrats.

This year it completed the work begun then by again electing a Democratic Legislature and by defeating one of the Republican Congressmen and barely electing the other. Had Mr. Beveridge remained regular and had the party organization in the State remained regular the result would have been the same, but the Democratic victory would have

been decisive and overwhelming instead of narrow as it is. Republican Insurgents in Iowa and Wisconsin were defeated by Democrats and Socialists, but they were not Insurgents who had won their title in the field of House or Senate by actually voting and working against their party colleagues. They were not true Insurgents, but simply what they called themselves, Progressives.

The election of Democratic Governors in five politically important States and of nine or ten Democratic Senators to take the places of Republicans, and the repudiation of Colonel Roosevelt and the doctrines of his New Nationalism have a meaning and a value not yet to be completely measured. The whole aspect and face of national politics are completely changed. Mr. Roosevelt is not eliminated as a factor in national affairs and as a force to be reckoned with in Republican politics, but seemingly he is eliminated as a candidate for President in 1912 or as a designator of a candidate for the Presidency. It hardly seems probable that he will be able to do in 1912 what he did in 1908, when his choice of Mr. Taft was ratified by the Republican National Convention at Chicago.

Two Democrats, Woodrow Wilson and Judson Harmon, are to-day the strongest two Democratic "possibilities" for the Presidency. If in the coming two years the Democrats who have been elected this month do not abuse the responsibilities intrusted to them, and if their administration of public affairs meets with general confidence and approval, the probabilities will all be on the side of the election of a Democratic President. The circumstance has been almost overlooked that this year's campaign has been the first since 1896 in which Mr. Bryan has not been a factor. He did not figure at all in the general campaign, and in Nebraska, where he took a part, the candidates he favored were defeated. Elsewhere there was no division among the Democrats as between Bryan men and anti-Bryan men or Bryan men and Cleveland men or silver men and "gold-bugs." The factional divisions were all on the other side. It is commonly known that many Republicans now fear that Mr. Roosevelt will come to occupy the same place in their party that Mr. Bryan for so long occupied in the Democratic organization.

There must be brought forth now from the responsible and able Democrats who have been brought to the fore at

this election the formulation of a progressive, coherent national policy. This is clearly understood. The first and most important problem that the newly elected Democrats have to face is what shall be done with the present tariff schedules. There can be no doubt on that point. The election was an unmistakable mandate. The present concern of the Democratic leaders is how revision shall be accomplished. Woodrow Wilson, who thinks clearly, said just before his election in a message which he sent to the "Evening Post" of New York:

"What we need is knowledge of the actual facts in respect to each industry, and honesty to act upon those facts when we have ascertained them. But how shall we act upon them? Certainly not by rapid and radical changes in our present tariffs, but by such a prolonged and steady change as will bring about an adaptation of the fiscal policy of the government to the real needs and circumstances of our manufacturing and laboring classes, with a view ultimately to get upon this basis: the taxation for the support of the government of those things for which it will not be a real hardship to pay high prices; if taxes upon these do not suffice, the taxation of those things which it will least burden the people to pay for, things not absolute necessities, things which they can do without suffering or privation, and throughout the whole process an honest seeking for the things which will yield the most revenue with the least burden to the people."

Eugene Foss, who has just been elected Governor of Massachusetts, sees just as clearly what the Democrats must do. Just before his election he said:

"Immediately upon the passage of the Payne-Aldrich act prices began to rise, until to-day in every home in the land the question of how to make both ends meet is a most serious one. The food-supply of the people was never included in the tax. The protected tariff was enacted to protect manufacturers from unfair foreign competition, not to allow food trusts or any other trusts to be sheltered by a high tariff wall that they could take the people by the throats and rob them. Under schedule K, the wool and woollen schedule, which President Taft declared was 'indefensible,' the duties were placed so high that pure woollen cloth costs twice as much here as abroad, and as a result the great masses of the American people are forced to wear cotton worsteds and sleazy, miserable fabrics made of cotton, and poor American shoddy in the place of warm wool. It deprives the majority of American people of the warm clothing so essential to health and comfort."

Tariff revision piecemeal may be essayed. There would hardly follow any great outburst of indignation if the woollen schedule, for example, should be taken up next winter and radically modified and revised downward. Other schedules of duties in the present law easily could be found

that are equally as indefensible. It will be instructive and interesting to watch Democratic sentiment in Congress crystallizing about the framing of a new tariff law. If the new Democratic House makes an honest and sincere attempt to correct some of the present glaring inequalities and iniquities of the import duties, there is no apparent reason why the bill should not be passed by the Senate. At the present time the Republican majority in the Senate is twenty-six. Ten new Democratic Senators will reduce that majority to six. Five Republican Insurgent Senators who voted against the Aldrich-Payne law will be in the Senate next winter. They could scarcely refuse to vote for a tariff-reduction measure, from whatever source, that carried in it the provisions and the rates of duty which they so ably and strongly urged when the present tariff law was under discussion in Congress. It seems inevitable that the first test of the new Congress will be the tariff. How will it be met?

EDWARD G. LOWRY.